

# THE AACHEN RELIQUARY OF EUSTATHIUS MALEINUS, 969–970\*

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There is preserved at Aachen an unusual silver-gilt object of the tenth century which has been recognized as belonging to the Byzantine world. Its form is that of a church with dome, external apse, and doors on the “north,” “west,” and “south” sides (fig. 1): the almost perfect cube is 202 mm. high, 200 mm. wide, and 196 mm. long. The casket has been the object of several scholarly discussions, including articles by Gustave Schlumberger and, more recently, André Grabar.<sup>1</sup> The latter devotes his paper for the most part to discovering the original function of the reliquary (which now contains some relics of Anastasius the Persian) and to relating it to German Romanesque art, but he reserves a brief introduction for the purpose of dating the object, which he considers to have been made in the period 969–1030.

The reliquary is particularly valuable for the inscriptions that adorn its four sides. Three are from the Psalms,<sup>2</sup> but the fourth, on the apse side of the

casket, is a dedicatory inscription which reads: Κ(ΥΠΙ)Ε ΒΟΗΘΕΙ ΤΩ CΩ ΔΟΥΛΩ ΕΥC-ΤΑΘΕΙΩ ΑΝΘΥΠΙΑΤΩ ΠΑΤΡΙΚ(ΙΩ) ΚΑΙ CΤΡΑΤΗΓΩ ΑΝΤΙΟΧΙΑC ΚΑΙ ΛΙΚΑΝΔΟΥ (fig. 2). This inscription is most unusual in two respects. First, it refers to Eustathius as a *strategos* of Antioch. If we look at the admirable article by Laurent,<sup>3</sup> who set out the literary and sigillographic evidence for the titles of the commanders of Antioch, we can see that nowhere does he record the rank of *strategos*, only those of duke and catepan. Furthermore, the *taktikon* of the Escorial Library, published by Professor N. Oikonomides,<sup>4</sup> which dates to the years 971–975, gives the title of duke to the commander of the city of Antioch. The second strange feature of the inscription is the uniting of the command of Antioch with that of Lykandus. During the greater part of the Byzantine occupation the importance of the Antioch command far outweighed that of Lykandus: the duke of Antioch is no. 19 in the Escorial *taktikon*, whereas the *strategos* of Lykandus is no. 38.<sup>5</sup> The regard in which the Byzantines held Antioch is well shown by the speech attributed to Nicephorus II Phocas by Leo the Deacon,<sup>6</sup> when Nicephorus speaks of Antioch as the third city of the world, remarking on its beauty and strength, the size of its population, and

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<sup>1</sup>G. Schlumberger, “L’inscription du reliquaire byzantin en forme d’église du trésor de la cathédrale d’Aix-la-Chapelle,” *Mon Piot*, 12 (1905), 201–6; A. Grabar, “Le reliquaire byzantin de la cathédrale d’Aix-la-Chapelle,” *L’art de la fin de l’Antiquité et du Moyen-Âge* (Paris, 1968), I, no. 33, pp. 427–33 (first published in *Karolingische und ottonische Kunst* [Wiesbaden, 1957], 115–31).

Since Grabar’s article was published, several articles have taken account of the Aachen reliquary, including H. Wentzel, “Das byzantinische Erbe der ottonischen Kaiser. Hypothesen über den Brautschatz der Theophanu II,” *Aachener Kunstblätter*, 43 (1972), 80 ff.

<sup>2</sup>Psalms 86:3, 131:8, and 131:13 (Septuagint). (Professor Grabar’s reading of Ps. 131:8 is incorrect).

86:3 † ΔΕΔΟΞΑCΜΕΝΑ ΕΛΛΗΘΗ ΠΕΡΙ CΟΥ Η ΠΟΛΙC ΤΟΥ ΘΕΟΥ ΗΜΩΝ, “Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of our God.”

131:8 † ΑΝΑCΤΗΘΙ ΚΥΡΙΕ ΕΙC ΤΗΝ ΑΝΑΠΑΥCΙΝ CΟΥ CΥ ΚΑΙ Η ΚΙΒΩΤΟC ΤΟΥ ΑΠΑCΜΑΤΟC CΟΥ, “O Lord, go up to your rest, you and your ark of holiness.”

131:13 † ΕΞΕΛΕΞΑΤΟ ΚΥΡΙΟC ΤΗΝ CΙΩΝ ΗΡΕΤΙCΑΤΟ ΑΥΤΗΝ ΕΙC ΚΑΤΟΙΚΙΑΝ ΕΑΥΤΩ, “The Lord has chosen Sion; he has desired it for his own dwelling.”

<sup>3</sup>V. Laurent, “La chronologie des gouverneurs d’Antioche sous la seconde domination byzantine (969–1084),” *MéUSJ*, 38 (1962), 221f.

<sup>4</sup>N. Oikonomides, *Les listes de préséance byzantines des IX<sup>e</sup> et X<sup>e</sup> siècles* (Paris, 1972), 262.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, 262–65.

<sup>6</sup>Leo Diaconus, *Historiae*, IV.11, ed. K. B. Hase, Bonn ed. (1828), 72–74.

the extraordinary quality of its buildings. Lykandus clearly did not provoke this kind of sentiment. We should note, too, the geographical separation of the two commands: a glance at a map shows that Antioch and Lykandus stand apart.<sup>7</sup> It is true that they both belong to the world of the Eastern frontier in the 960s, but there seems little reason strategically or geographically to unite the two.

How, then, are we to explain this unusual inscription? Clearly, it was the product of an unusual moment in the history of the Byzantine occupation (which can be dated October 969–1084), and this allows us to be more specific in our dating. There is an unexpected gap in the list of the commanders of Antioch as given by Laurent which falls in the period 969–976. The year 976 is the first in which we find a reference to a duke of Antioch or, indeed, to any regular holder of this post. This reference appears in the *History* of John Scylitzes<sup>8</sup> and tells of the promotion of Michael Burtzes to the rank of *magistros* and his appointment as duke of Antioch. I say “regular” holder of this post because Scylitzes refers to an extraordinary command given to the patricius Nicholas in 970/971, when the Arab forces made their counterstrike against Byzantium in northern Syria and besieged Antioch for five months;<sup>9</sup> in the same way we should regard the command given to Michael Burtzes in 971 to repair the walls of Antioch which, subsequent to this siege, were shaken down by an earthquake. Yahya of Antioch<sup>10</sup> records that Burtzes was sent with 12,000 workmen to repair the breaches in the walls.

Apart then from these extraordinary commands, we have no idea of the commanders of Antioch in the years 969–976; nor do we know their titles for the early years, although, as I have noted, we know that the commander of Antioch had the title of duke when the Escorial *taktikon* was written. Fortunately, we find a further piece of evidence in the *History* of John Scylitzes.<sup>11</sup> He records that at the time of the Arab attack on Byzantine Syria in 970/971 the Emperor John Tzimiskes sent to the *strategos* of Mesopotamia and asked him to bring reinforcements to the beleaguered inhabitants of

Antioch. But Scylitzes later clearly refers, in respect of events in 976, to a duke of Mesopotamia.<sup>12</sup> One immediate conclusion we can draw is that at least some of the work of reorganization reflected in the Escorial *taktikon* was the work of the Emperor John, who introduced new titles in the period 971–975. This is not in itself surprising; his predecessor Nicephorus Phocas had little time to reorganize the provinces he had conquered before his murder in December 969. But it does focus our attention on the period October 969–975 as the most likely time for the command of Eustathius. As I remarked above, the command belonged to an unusual moment in the history of the reoccupation, and what was more unusual than these early years? It might also be noted that until 975 the border reached only as far as Antioch and Palatza, and that the area farther south, especially after 971, was by no means under Byzantine control. It is likely that the dukes were only appointed when the decision was made to expand eastward and southward.

Fortunately, Byzantine historians now have available the *Life* of the Patriarch Christopher by Abraham the *protospatharios*<sup>13</sup>—a biography of the last Melchite patriarch of Antioch before the occupation of the city in 969. Its author (who was probably born between 940–950, perhaps even after 950) was an eyewitness to events in the 960s and is thus a valuable source for that decade.<sup>14</sup> He records that there was at Antioch, shortly after October 969, “Eustathios the patricius, *strategos* of Cappadocia, called al-Malayni,”<sup>15</sup> who was a member of the Maleinus family, one of the powerful Asia Minor families who had emerged during the ninth century.<sup>16</sup> He is the only patricius Eustathius whom our sources mention as being in Antioch during the early years of the Byzantine rule; and, indeed, no subsequent commanders are known to have had that name.

The Maleinus family has not in recent years been given the attention that it deserves. It was the sub-

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 314.70.

<sup>13</sup> H. Zayat, “Vie du patriarche melkite d’Antioche Christophe († 967) par le protospathaire Ibrahim b. Yuhanna. Document inédit du X<sup>e</sup> siècle,” *Proche-Orient Chrétien*, 2,1 (1952), 11–38; 2,2, pp. 333–66.

<sup>14</sup> See the unpublished M. Litt. thesis of J. Pennybacker, “The Relations of Byzantium with the Islamic Powers of the Near East, 959–976” (Oxford, 1979), 23–37.

<sup>15</sup> Zayat, *op. cit.*, 358–59.

<sup>16</sup> For a list of families emerging in the ninth and tenth centuries, see A. A. M. Bryer, “A Byzantine Family: the Gabrades, c. 979–c. 1653,” *University of Birmingham Historical Journal*, 12,2 (1970), 164 note 1.

<sup>7</sup> See Oikonomidès, *op. cit.*, 399.

<sup>8</sup> Scylitzes, *Synopsis historiarum*, ed. I. Thurn (Berlin, 1973), 314–15.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 287.

<sup>10</sup> Yahya of Antioch, *Histoire de Yahya-ibn-Sa‘id d’Antioche continué de Sa‘id-ibn-Bitriq*, ed. and trans. I. Kratchkovsky and A. Vasiliev, PO, XVIII, fasc. 5 (1924), 701–833; *ibid.*, XXIII, fasc. 3 (1932), 349–520, esp. 351.

<sup>11</sup> *Op. cit.*, 287.84.

ject of a very brief study in 1902 by L. Petit,<sup>17</sup> who edited the *Life* of St. Michael Maleinus (uncle of Eustathius Maleinus), but it has never been afforded a thorough description. In part this seems to be due to the relative paucity of available information: no seals have been published,<sup>18</sup> and we owe what biographical material there is to the *Life* of St. Michael Maleinus and casual references to Eustathius and his father Constantine during the years 960–996. An examination of this admittedly scant information will both be useful and help us to decide whether we are correct in linking Eustathius Maleinus and Eustathius, *strategos* of Antioch.

Chapter 3 of the *Life* of St. Michael Maleinus informs us: πατρὶς τοῦν τῷ γενναίῳ τούτῳ τῆς εὐσεβείας ἀγωνιστῇ Χαρσιανόν;<sup>19</sup> and undoubtedly this was the home ground of the Maleinoi throughout the tenth century. Their influence was not limited to the town or theme of Charsianon; rather, by the second half of the tenth century they were all-powerful throughout the surrounding area. We owe the details of the early history of the Maleinoi almost entirely to the *Life* of St. Michael Maleinus (see diagram). His paternal grandfather was named Eustathius, his maternal grandfather Adralestus, his father Eudocimus, and his mother Anastaso. Of these early members I need only remark that the family Maleinus played a significant role in Byzantine affairs as early as the end of the ninth century, and that their attachment to the area of Cappadocia was already established by that time.

St. Michael Maleinus, whose original name was Manuel, lived from 894 to 961. The importance of his family is shown by the fact that he received the title of spatharocandidatus around the year 909 and spent the period 910–912 at the imperial court. His retirement from the world began in 912, when he assumed the name Michael; in 915 the death of his father allowed him to give to his brother all his landed property.

The sphere of influence of the Maleinoi by this

time must have included the areas of Cappadocia, Charsianon, and Lykandus. Constantine, brother of St. Michael and father of Eustathius, is said in the *De velitatione bellica*<sup>20</sup> for many years to have been Καππαδοκῶν στρατηγῆσας. Similarly, Theophanes Continuatus speaks of τῷ στρατηγῷ Καππαδοκίας Κωνσταντίνῳ τῷ πατρικίῳ Μαλεῖνῳ<sup>21</sup> in the context of his involvement in the year 960 with the campaign of Leo Phocas against Saif ad-Daulah. This Constantine, who is surnamed ὁ μέγας in the *Life* of St. Michael Maleinus, was a most active commander: the Arab sources record that a member of the Maleinus family (presumably Constantine) unsuccessfully ambushed the Tarsits between 23 October and 20 November 963.<sup>22</sup>

The undoubted influence of this generation was supplemented by the marriage of Eudocima, sister of St. Michael Maleinus and Constantine, to the powerful Bardas Phocas, representative of one of the mightiest families of the Asia Minor aristocracy.<sup>23</sup> The product of this marriage was the Emperor Nicephorus II, the *curopalates* Leo, and Constantine Phocas. Leo the *curopalates*, who was at one stage domestic of the East, in turn fathered that Bardas Phocas who was to exert such a powerful influence over the Eastern frontier in the second half of the tenth century. Thus Eustathius Maleinus was a first cousin to the Emperor Nicephorus II, which will be an important consideration later.

Our first literary references to Eustathius Maleinus occur in John Scylitzes and Yahya of Antioch, during the opening months of the revolt of Bardas Sclerus in 976.<sup>24</sup> Yahya calls him governor

<sup>20</sup> Edited in Leo Diaconus, *op. cit.* (note 6 *supra*), 181–258, esp. 185.

<sup>21</sup> Theophanes Continuatus, *Chronographia*, ed. I. Bekker, Bonn ed. (1838), 479.

<sup>22</sup> See M. Canard, *Histoire de la dynastie des Hamdanides de Jazîra et de Syrie*, I (Paris, 1951), 818. Also Leo Diaconus, *op. cit.*, 418. Yahya of Antioch, PO, XVIII, 5, 771, refers under 953/4 to the death in action of the Patrikios Leo Maleinus, who must be a younger brother of Michael and Constantine Maleinus; cf. N. Adontz and M. Canard, "Quelques noms de personnages byzantins dans une pièce du poète arabe Abû Firâs (X<sup>e</sup> siècle)," *Byzantion*, XI (1936), 454–56.

<sup>23</sup> For the Phocas family, see I. Djurić, "Porodica Foka," *ZRVI*, 17 (1976), 195 ff. (French résumé, 293–96). On the family alliance, see R. Morris, "The Powerful and the Poor in Tenth-Century Byzantium: Law and Reality," *Past and Present*, 73 (Nov. 1976), 16; and G. Ostrogorsky, "Observations on the Aristocracy in Byzantium," *DOP*, 25 (1971), 7. The *De velitatione bellica* seems to be a pro-Phocas and Maleinus document, mentioning as the three outstanding generals of the time Caesar Bardas Phocas, the patricius Constantine Maleinus, and Nicephorus Phocas.

<sup>24</sup> Scylitzes, *op. cit.* (note 8 *supra*), 318; and Yahya, *op. cit.* (note 10 *supra*), 371 f.

<sup>17</sup> L. Petit, "Vie de Saint Michel Maléinos," *ROChr*, 7 (1902), 543–94.

<sup>18</sup> W. Seibt, *Die Byzantinischen Bleisiegel in Österreich* (Vienna, 1978), 274–75 has published some seals under the name of Maleinus but they appear to date to the eleventh century.

<sup>19</sup> Petit, *op. cit.*, 550. On Charsianon, see E. Honigmann, "Charsianon Kastron," *Byzantion*, 10 (1935), 261–71; also Oikonomides, *op. cit.* (note 4 *supra*), 348. E. Honigmann, "Un itinéraire arabe à travers le Pont," *AIPHOS*, 4 (1936), 286 f., suggests that the Maleinoi also possessed in the area of northeastern Anatolia estates which extended for 115 km.

of Tarsus with the title of patricius; Scylitzes gives him the higher rank of *magistros*, but speaks only of a "command of part of the Imperial armies." Other details in these two works suggest that they are not parallel accounts. We need not doubt that Eustathius held the office of governor of Tarsus, but it may have been a little time before the opening campaign of Sclerus' revolt: certainly Eustathius is referred to as *magistros* from then on. His part in the campaign is not always clear, but his close connection with Cappadocia is emphasized by Yahya, who speaks of Eustathius returning to his house there, and his part with Peter the stratopedarch in the battle against Sclerus in the same area.<sup>25</sup> Scylitzes gives an inadequate account of this campaign, omitting further reference to Eustathius until 978, when Bardas Phocas meets Maleinus and Michael Burtzes at Caesarea.<sup>26</sup> It seems inconceivable that Maleinus did not play at least as great a role as Yahya suggests: the latter specifically places him in the battle which was to prove fatal for the stratopedarch Peter. This is perfectly consonant with his undoubted succession to his father as a magnate of Cappadocia; he was thus the chief local representative of the imperial forces in an area where much of the initial fighting took place. This is confirmed by Scylitzes' implication that in 978 a council-of-war took place at Caesarea.

In 987 the nobles Bardas Phocas and Eustathius Maleinus conceived a rebellion against the Emperor Basil II. They conspired in Maleinus' house in Charsianon and declared Phocas emperor immediately before the announcement that Sclerus was returning from exile.<sup>27</sup>

The final reference to Maleinus is a famous story, more often invoked in the context of Byzantine law. After giving the Emperor Basil II and his whole retinue a sumptuous feast in Charsianon, Maleinus was led by Basil to Constantinople and kept there until his death on 1 January 996. On the death of this "over-mighty subject," his goods were made public property and a sumptuary law was passed.<sup>28</sup> In Basil's Novel of 996 a scholium draws attention to the Phocas and Maleinus families as examples of the excessively strong aristocracy of Asia Minor. There was good reason to link those two families, who formed between them a mighty axis of power

capable of seriously opposing the imperial authority.<sup>29</sup>

We are now in a position to relate Eustathius Maleinus to the inscription on the reliquary. The Life of the Patriarch Christopher confirms that he held the rank of patricius and that he was present in Antioch in late 969; the whole history of his family and every individual reference to him attest that he came from Cappadocia and the region of Lykandus. It is thus possible to identify him with the Eustathius of the reliquary. The case is further strengthened if we consider events at the end of 969 and remember Eustathius' close connection with the imperial family. The sources are in universal agreement that almost immediately after the capture of Antioch the Emperor Nicephorus became estranged from the captors of the city, Michael Burtzes and Peter Phocas.<sup>30</sup> Michael Burtzes, who later twice held the office of duke, was ordered to remain at home (καὶ οἴκοι μένειν ἐκέλευσε); and certain authors associate the pair in the plot to kill Nicephorus.<sup>31</sup> The emperor was thus deprived of the services of two natural commanders of Antioch at a time of sudden expansion on the Eastern frontier. In this situation who could be more appropriate for appointment to Antioch than the emperor's own cousin? He could mobilize substantial forces and bring them to Antioch quickly. Nicephorus was no doubt already aware that hostile elements threatened him and wished to consolidate his position by appointing members of his own faction.

Two observations are relevant to the foregoing analysis. First, the holding of double commands of this kind on the Eastern frontier seems to have been a temporary phenomenon, brought about by the need for experienced and trustworthy commanders at a time of sudden expansion and emergency. There is little evidence for the continuation of this practice, since Basil II was completely opposed to the immense power that had been acquired by the great families of Asia Minor. Second, we should be careful not to misunderstand the significance of the name Peter Phocas. For, although Gustave Schlumberger went so far as to identify this general with the nephew of Nicephorus Phocas (and

<sup>25</sup> Yahya, *op. cit.*, 373–74.

<sup>26</sup> Scylitzes, *op. cit.*, 324.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 332.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 340. Petit, *op. cit.* (note 17 *supra*), 586, seems to give a wrong date here.

<sup>29</sup> Zepos, *Jus*, I, 262 ff.; see Ostrogorsky, *loc. cit.* K. E. Zachariä von Lingenthal, *Jus graeco-romanum* (Leipzig, 1856–84), III, 311 note 33, thought the scholium was in Basil's hand.

<sup>30</sup> Scylitzes, *op. cit.*, 273; Yahya, *op. cit.*, 825; and Zonaras, *Epitoma historiarum*, Bonn ed. (1897), III, 510.

<sup>31</sup> Yahya, *op. cit.*, 829; and Zonaras, *op. cit.*, III, 517.

son of Leo the *curopalates*),<sup>32</sup> the Arabic sources make it clear that he was the “ghulam” of Nicephorus or τὸν τοῦ Φωκᾶ δούλον, as he is described in Scylitzes.<sup>33</sup> He must have been a eunuch in the service of the Phocas family, who acquired his title of “al-Atrabazi” (ἐπὶ τῆς τραπέζης) when Nicephorus gained the throne.<sup>34</sup> While it is true that he gave distinguished service to the Emperor Nicephorus, it is also clear that he did not belong to the inner circle of the Phocas faction. His connivance in the conspiracy against Nicephorus, his namesake, is therefore more explicable.

How long Eustathius held the post of *strategos* of Antioch we do not know; but he is unlikely, in view of his connections, to have retained it for very long after the death of Nicephorus on 11 December 969. That he was not replaced immediately is suggested by the natural uproar that occurred in the capital (particularly the initial refusal of the Patriarch Polyeuctes to crown the new emperor) and by the general confusion of the Empire: πολὺν δὲ σάλον καὶ ταραχὴν ἐχούσης τῆς βασιλείας ἔντε τῇ ἔφ καὶ τῇ ἐσπέρᾳ . . .<sup>35</sup> That he did not stay very long into 970 is suggested by the absence of any other reference, save that in the *Life* of the Patriarch Christopher. We may suppose, therefore, a general purge of the coterie that had formed around Nicephorus Phocas and to which Eustathius Maleinus belonged. Even if he felt no desire to dispute Tzimisces’ throne (and the sources are silent on this matter), he would not have continued long in the sensitive post of commander of Antioch. Most probably he left Antioch in the first half of 970 for his ancestral lands in Cappadocia and Charsianon.

The absence of a strong commander may help us to account for the utter disarray in which the forces of Antioch found themselves when the Arabs made their counterstrike in 970–971. That the fall of Antioch and the imposition of terms on Aleppo sent reverberations throughout Islam cannot be denied; that the Byzantines were unprepared for the reaction also seems very likely from our accounts.<sup>36</sup> The critical passage occurs in Scylitzes, where we are informed that a large force of Arabs, led by Zochar, laid siege to Antioch. The emperor

thereupon ordered the *strategos* of Mesopotamia to gather an army and help the besieged; at the same time he sent the patricius Nicholas (one of the eunuchs of his household) to be overall commander with additional forces. The account of the campaign given by P. E. Walker shows that the Muslim forces arrived during the winter of 970–971, “perhaps even before the end of 970.”<sup>37</sup> We must, therefore, date Nicholas’ command from the very end of 970 or the beginning of 971. I suspect that there had been an interregnum of some time between the departure of Eustathius Maleinus and the arrival of the patricius Nicholas.

The reliquary is today adapted to house the cranium of St. Anastasius the Persian. In view of the difficulty in fitting such an object into the casket, it seems unlikely that this was its original function.<sup>38</sup> What that function was is not immediately apparent, but there can be little doubt that the casket was intended for an ecclesiastical purpose: its shape is that of a church, crosses adorn the doors and the inscriptions made clear reference to Η ΠΟΛΙΣ ΤΟΥ ΘΕΟΥ and ΣΙΩΝ. Using these clues, Professor Grabar tried to be more specific about its original use. He noted the way in which the quotations from the Psalms emphasize the City of God and suggested that this gave it a symbolic character, intimating the New Jerusalem or Sion. He went on to observe that Christians visualized this Heavenly Jerusalem in terms of either the Jewish tradition or the Holy Places as constituted by Constantine the Great and that the Aachen casket is meant to refer to the Holy Sepulcher.

Having established its symbolic nature, Grabar attempted to identify the reliquary’s function by adopting a typological approach. He compared it to similar Byzantine and post-Byzantine caskets, hoping thereby to find a common function in a common symbolism. This approach was difficult in so far as it was an unproven assumption that such a connection existed between function and symbol; further, very few comparable objects from the Byzantine period have survived. Grabar was obliged to make his identification by invoking a group of eighteenth-century censers, since it was impossible

<sup>32</sup> G. Schlumberger, *L’épopée byzantine à la fin du dixième siècle*, I (Paris, 1896), 47, 142.

<sup>33</sup> Scylitzes, *op. cit.*, 315.

<sup>34</sup> Yahya, *op. cit.*, 814. See J. H. Forsyth, “The Byzantine-Arab Chronicle of Yahya (938–1934)” (Ph. D. diss., Univ. of Michigan, 1977), 376, 446 note 14.

<sup>35</sup> Scylitzes, *op. cit.*, 286.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 287; Yahya, *op. cit.*, 350–51.

<sup>37</sup> P. E. Walker, “A Byzantine Victory over the Fatimids at Alexandretta (971),” *Byzantion*, 42 (1972), 431 f.

<sup>38</sup> Substantial modification was needed to admit the skull of the Saint, although no documentary evidence survives to inform us when this happened. The present base-plate and modifications to the feet seemed to me on inspection to be of relatively recent date.

to be sure of the use of the Byzantine examples.<sup>39</sup> Similarly, it was difficult for him to prove his alternative suggestion that they were lamps, more particularly "Jerusalem" or "Sion" lamps, which were carried in liturgical processions. The evidence is not conclusive and it is clear that such architectural caskets could have had a variety of liturgical uses to which their symbolism was appropriate.

Setting aside such unconvincing comparisons, it is arguable that the reliquary would be difficult to use as a lamp since its limited openings would not shed an effective light. Nor does it seem obviously made for the burning of incense, which usually (though not always) requires a more portable container. It is worth noting that the Aachen casket has neither rings nor handles, unlike the majority of censers or lamps.<sup>40</sup> In view of its size and weight, it seems more likely that it was made to contain or display an object. If so, an attractive alternative would be that it was made to contain the Reserved Host, *viz.*, an artophorion. This interpretation is supported by the quotations from the Psalms, which imply that the casket should be thought of as a place where God is present. This most naturally leads us to think of the symbolic presence of God in the form of the Host and gives a more specific meaning to the inscriptions than Professor Grabar's "New Jerusalem."<sup>41</sup>

The notion of symbolic presence is reinforced by the striking similarity of the casket to Byzantine representations of the Holy Sepulcher, as Grabar noted. A group of late antique ivories show the main features of this tradition: the body of the building

is a cube, topped by a substantial dome, which is supported by a drum with colonnettes. Along the top of the cube runs a heavy moulding. The Aachen reliquary shows all these features, with the addition of a pronounced apse not visible in the ivories. It thus stands in a long tradition of such images.<sup>42</sup> These representations are made more interesting by the possibility that they reproduce features of the actual Holy Sepulcher. This does not mean the large Rotunda of the Anastasis that was built to envelop the Tomb site, since this had a somewhat different appearance.<sup>43</sup> Rather, the ivories imitate the "aedicula" or small shrine that was built over the Tomb itself.

Opinions in recent years have differed over how this "aedicula" would have appeared in the Middle Ages.<sup>44</sup> This is so because the information provided by pilgrims and other writers is confusing and difficult to use. Nor is it possible to derive a straightforward picture from medieval representations of the Holy Sepulcher, which appear to show a wide variety of aedicula types.<sup>45</sup> The evidence of the Aachen reliquary is, therefore, extremely valuable. Not only is it a rare tenth-century model of the Holy Sepulcher, but it also belongs to a city, not far distant from Jerusalem, where there was firsthand knowledge of the Sepulcher. It suggests that Wilkinson's dismissal of the documentary value of the late antique ivories may not be justified; they were not intended "simply to represent the artist's idea of a suitable mausoleum."<sup>46</sup> The ambiguity of other contemporary evidence neither confirms nor refutes this. Until such refutation is made, we should seriously consider the reliquary (and ivories) as evidence for the appearance of the aedicula. If we accept this, then most probably the presence of a

<sup>39</sup>The difficulty is shown by two examples: the twelfth-century casket from St. Mark's Treasury, Venice, and a church model in pottery, recently discovered by the excavators at Kalenderhane Camii, Istanbul, and dating to the eleventh or twelfth century. The former object, which seems to be secular, is not in the same symbolic tradition nor is its function known. The latter was not marked by any smoke that could be tested and was incomplete.

For an illustration of the Venice piece, see H. R. Hahnloser, ed., *Il Tesoro di San Marco* (Florence, 1971), II, pl. LXXX. I am grateful to Prof. Cecil Striker of the University of Pennsylvania for permission to mention the Kalenderhane object.

<sup>40</sup>See, for example, the censer reconstructed by A. Xyngopoulos, Πήλινον Βυζαντινὸν Θυμιαστήριον, *Αρχαιολογική Εφημερίς* (1930), 127–40.

<sup>41</sup>A suggestion already made by W. F. Volbach in W. F. Volbach and J. Lafontaine-Dosogne, eds., *Byzanz und der Christliche Osten*, Propyläen Kunstgeschichte, 3 (Berlin, 1968), 196. See also G. A. Soteriou, "The Artophorion of the Metropolitan Church at Adrianople" (in Greek), *Thrakika*, II (1929), 7–10, for a seventeenth-century artophorion which is very similar in appearance to the Aachen casket. This seems to me to prove the variety of uses to which such caskets could be put. The use of the word *κιβωτός* (quoted in note 2) seems significant in this context.

<sup>42</sup>Examples of this group exist at the Bayerisches Nationalmuseum, Munich, and at the Castello Sforzesco, Milan. Illustrated by J. Beckwith, *Early Christian and Byzantine Art* (Harmondsworth, 1970), pls. 36 and 37.

<sup>43</sup>The appearance of the Rotunda is discussed by C. Coüasson, *The Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem* (London, 1974), *passim*.

<sup>44</sup>See in particular K. J. Conant, "The Original Buildings at the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem," *Speculum*, 31 (1956), 1–48; John Wilkinson, "The Tomb of Christ, An Outline of its Structural History," *Levant*, 4 (1972), 83–97; *idem*, *Jerusalem Pilgrims before the Crusades* (Warminster, 1977).

<sup>45</sup>For an indication of the problems, see D. Barag and J. Wilkinson, "The Monza-Bobbio Flasks and the Holy Sepulchre," *Levant*, 6 (1974), 179–87, where the two authors are unable to agree.

<sup>46</sup>Wilkinson, "Tomb of Christ," 91–92, which assumes that the tradition of such representations is an independent Gallic one.

ciborium around the aedícula is sufficient to explain the varying representations and descriptions of earlier centuries.<sup>47</sup> One further point is relevant. It is notable that the later building on the site, which is more reliably reported, is very similar to the Aachen piece. If Wilkinson is correct in saying that "those who restore such a monument as the edicule make their plans conservatively," then this may support our view that the reliquary represents the "aedícula" of the Holy Sepulcher.<sup>48</sup>

The appearance of such a representation at this time also tempts us to see in our reliquary a propagandist intent. A near-crusading spirit briefly gathered strength in Byzantium at this time; it was to find its most notable expression in the expedition of John Tzimisces in 975.<sup>49</sup> As Tzimisces remarks in a letter recorded by Matthew of Edessa, "We were intent on delivering the Holy Sepulchre of Christ our God from the bondage of the Muslims."<sup>50</sup> Both Nicephorus and John were noted for their piety, and numerous stories describe their crusading zeal: it is recorded that Nicephorus wished martyrdom to be conferred on soldiers who fell in battle fighting against the forces of Islam.<sup>51</sup>

Professor Grabar also remarked that "les formes et la technique des ornements, sur le reliquaire, ne sont pas purement byzantines; elles appartiennent à un art gréco-syrien qui se laissait influencer par des modèles asiatiques, chrétiens et musulmans."<sup>52</sup> There can be little doubt of the orientalizing character and style of our casket, and in this respect I would like to examine certain of its features which are of particular interest: the pointed arches of the doors and windows, the colonnettes that support the dome, and the "pumpkin" domes with their vermiculate design.

<sup>47</sup>This is suggested by the illustrations to two ninth-century Psalters (Chludov and Mt. Athos, Pantocrator 61). They show an "aedícula" that is either rectangular or circular, topped with a cupola or a pyramidal roof. See André Grabar, "Quelques notes sur les psautiers byzantins du IX<sup>e</sup> siècle," *CahArch*, 15 (1965), 69–70.

<sup>48</sup>Wilkinson, "Tomb of Christ," 95.

<sup>49</sup>On this expedition, see the article by P. E. Walker, "The 'Crusade' of John Tzimisces in the Light of New Arabic Evidence," *Byzantion*, 47 (1977), 301 ff.

<sup>50</sup>E. Dulaurier, *Chronique de Matthieu d'Edesse (962–1136)* (Paris, 1858), 22; A. E. Dostourian, "Chronicle of Matthew of Edessa" (Ph.D. diss., Rutgers Univ., 1972), 19.

<sup>51</sup>Scylitzes, *op. cit.*, 274.62, quoted in V. Grumel, *Les registres des actes du patriarchat de Constantinople*, I, fasc. 2, *Les registres de 715 à 1043* (Kadiköy-Istanbul, 1936), 225. See also a numismatic note in A. R. Bellinger and P. Grierson, *Catalogue of the Byzantine Coins in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection and in the Whittemore Collection*, III, 2 (Washington, D. C., 1973), 635.

<sup>52</sup>Grabar, *op. cit.* (note 1 *supra*), 428.

The use of pointed arches by the Muslim world dates from the eighth century in Syria and the ninth in Egypt and North Syria. They appear in the great Cairo mosque of Ibn Tulun (876–879); to the same period date the Fustat Nilometer (861–862) and the Great Mosque of Qairawan (862).<sup>53</sup> Furthermore, the use of the pointed arch was not unknown in the Caucasus at this time: Georgian architects certainly used the pointed arch in the ninth and tenth centuries.<sup>54</sup> It was, of course, never used in a consistent program of "Gothic" architecture, but Harvey has pointed to the area of northern Syria and eastern Turkey as being particularly significant in the formation of that architecture.<sup>55</sup> In contrast, the use of the pointed arch was virtually unknown in the Byzantine world.

The door arches of our casket are of an unusual type. They are "ogee" or "four-centered" arches, a variant which has few parallels anywhere at this time. In one sense it is merely an elaboration of the simple pointed arch, but it is sufficiently distinctive to merit special consideration. I do not know of any examples in the Muslim and Byzantine worlds before or during the tenth century,<sup>56</sup> and there is a similar paucity of evidence elsewhere. The Georgian church of Armazi (864) is said to have slightly ogee arches used as squinches, and the Armenian church library at Sanahin (1063) also seems to have ogee niches and a triple ogee entrance arch;<sup>57</sup> but the ogee is nevertheless infrequent in the Caucasus at this time. The same is true of ornament on "minor" art. Chubinashvili, in his book on Georgian repoussé work, dates a few pieces of metal work that employ ogee style to the tenth century, but none to the eleventh; however, the fine Armenian pieces which use the ogee device—such as the gold reliquary made for Eatchi Proshian—are all later in date.<sup>58</sup> I therefore conclude that the pointed arch belongs most naturally to the area of North Syria, Eastern Turkey, and North Africa, and that the

<sup>53</sup>See the useful list in K. A. C. Creswell, *Early Muslim Architecture*, 2 vols. (2nd ed. Oxford, 1959), 441–44.

<sup>54</sup>See, for example, Oshki (970) and Kumurdo (964): Rasudan Mapisashvili and Vakhtang Tsintsaze, *The Arts of Ancient Georgia* (London, 1979), 109–12, 129–30, 138–41.

<sup>55</sup>J. H. Harvey, "The Origins of Gothic Architecture: Some Further Thoughts," *AntJ*, 48 (1968), 87 f.

<sup>56</sup>Creswell's examples (*op. cit.*, 443 f.) do not seem to me to be true examples of the form.

<sup>57</sup>See *Il complesso mosaiico di Sanahin (X–XIII sec.)*, Documenti di architettura armena, 3 (Milan, 1970).

<sup>58</sup>G. N. Chubinashvili, *Georgian Repoussé Work, VIIIth to XVIIIth Centuries* (Tbilisi, 1959), nos. 28, 45, 47; S. Der Nersessian, *Armenian Art* (London, 1978), 161, 207.

Caucasians were among the first Christians to use it. The ogee arch appears to belong to the same areas, with the exception of North Africa, but the evidence is by no means complete.

The impression of Middle Eastern workmanship is not diminished by the colonnade supporting the dome which leaves alternate arches blank in a manner reminiscent of Georgian churches of this period, such as Oshki (970) or Ishkhani (1032). This style is not unknown in Byzantium—for example, it is found in the Panagia ton Chalkeon at Thessaloniki (1028)—but it is much rarer in Byzantium than in the Caucasus.

The final feature to which I want to draw attention is the use of bulbous “pumpkin” domes decorated with a vermiculate design. In contrast to what has already been discussed, pumpkin domes are unknown in the Caucasus, very rare in Islam,<sup>59</sup> but relatively common in Byzantium. The church of SS. Sergius and Bacchus at Constantinople is an early example; the Pharos Church (864), which with the Nea Church signals the beginning of Middle Byzantine architecture, had a central pumpkin dome, as did Bodrum Camii (920) and the Eski Imaret Camii (1081–87). In contrast, the churches of the Caucasus had conical domes almost exclusively. It is true that the Byzantine examples are internal pumpkin domes, and that no external ones survive, but in every case the original external roof has been replaced many times, so that we cannot speculate on its original shape. In any event, the notion of a “scooped-out” dome seems peculiar to Byzantium. Yet the vermiculate design, made of silver wire and niello, gives a strong impression of an oriental or orientalizing style. It is not possible to compare it to that of other metal products of the Muslim or Byzantine worlds, since so little survives from this period; nor is it sufficiently distinctive to permit a comparison with architectural or other figurative decoration. The whole tenor of the work, however, with its intricate curling patterns, more strongly recalls the art of Islam than that of Byzantium. The impression is of work produced by a craftsman who had been exposed to Islamic influence, presumably on the Eastern frontier.

There is some danger in applying to the minor arts criteria that concern the stylistic development of buildings. The maker of a small devotional object is not bound to imitate contemporary churches.

<sup>59</sup>The Great Mosque of Qairawan, dating from the ninth century, is the only example known to me.

But on the principle of *ex nihilo nihil*, Professor Grabar seems correct in seeing in our casket features that are not “purement byzantines.” On grounds of style, it appears to have been made in the Middle East, presumably at Antioch, by a craftsman whose traditions belong to that area. We can account for the unusual feature of the pumpkin dome if we remember that the piece was intended to represent the Holy Sepulcher. As such it may be imitative of an earlier Byzantine example (perhaps kept at Antioch), thereby introducing an element of heterogeneity into the work of a local artisan. It may also be possible to speculate on the nationality of that craftsman. I have noted that the reliquary was made for a *strategos* of 969–970. The history of the period makes it clear that the Muslims fled before the inexorable and ruthless Byzantine advance, seeking refuge in the Islamic world and abandoning their former homes. In 964 Miskawayh records that 50,000 North Syrians emigrated to Damascus, Ramlat, and elsewhere because of famine and the Byzantine advance; in the case of Antioch, Yahya says that those few who did not flee were taken prisoner.<sup>60</sup> In other words, given the period of the casket’s manufacture, a local Christian is likely to have made it—a conclusion we would expect, considering the nature of the object. I can say no more, save that the Christian may have been Caucasian, particularly in view of the known tradition of metalworking in that area and the presence of Caucasians in North Syria at that time.<sup>61</sup>

A further passage from the *Life of Christopher* may shed light on the later history of the casket. Abraham the protospatharius relates that in 967—at the time of the Patriarch’s martyrdom—certain Muslims in the city of Antioch took the opportunity to rob the church treasury of all its precious objects.<sup>62</sup> These were then dispersed in the succeeding months of chaos. What could be more natural than that the first governor of the city should replace part of this lost treasure by a gift that would also draw attention to himself in a most desirable way? If this assumption is correct, we can speculate on

<sup>60</sup>Miskawayh, *The Eclipse of the ‘Abbasid Caliphate, II, The Concluding Portion of the Experience of the Nations by Miskawaihi*, ed. and trans. H. Amedroz and D. Margoliouth (Oxford, 1921), 203; Yahya, *op. cit.*, 823; for a general account of the demographic shift of Muslim populations at this period, see G. Dagron, “Minorités ethniques et religieuses dans l’Orient byzantin à la fin du X<sup>e</sup> et au XI<sup>e</sup> siècle: l’immigration syrienne,” *TM*, 6 (1976), 177 f., esp. 179–84.

<sup>61</sup>See *ibid.*

<sup>62</sup>*Life of Christopher*, 351–52; Yahya, 809–10.



the subsequent fate of the piece. Since it had become ecclesiastical property, it is likely that the artophorion remained in Antioch throughout the Byzantine occupation of the city. It was probably still there when the Crusaders arrived at the end of the eleventh century. They would have conveyed it to Europe at some time during the twelfth

or early thirteenth century and have brought it to its eventual resting place in Aachen.

*Note:* Since this article was written the following publication has appeared: *Cappadocia, Charsianon, Sebasteia and Lykandos*, Tabula Imperii Byzantini, II (Vienna, 1981).



1. Aachen, Cathedral. Reliquary, "West" Side



2. Aachen, Cathedral. Reliquary, Apse ("East") Side